



Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1123/22

Paper 2 Reading

May/June 2021

INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading passages.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.



This document has **4** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Passage 1

Rice

- 1 It is astonishing that there is archaeological evidence of rice cultivation in China around 8000 years ago. Settlements in rice-growing areas became sophisticated cultures, often with advanced social and political structures. Such was the importance of rice that it quickly spread from China to many other parts of the world, for example the Philippines and Taiwan, Borneo and the Malay Peninsula, and parts of Africa. By the first century, rice was so widespread that grains dating from that time have been recovered from a grave in Iran and also found in the Po valley in Italy. 5
- 2 In many cultures, rice was used to mark celebrations; even today, sometimes relatives and friends scatter rice over the bride and groom during or after their wedding as a symbol of good luck, and in the Philippines rice wine is drunk on special occasions such as harvest celebrations. Rice is also mentioned in medieval Islamic texts and, in Indonesia, the rice goddess Dewi Sri is associated with life and prosperity because rice is the staple food of the country. Thailand has a similar rice goddess, thus showing the ancient links between rice and religious belief. 10
- 3 Down through the ages, rice has been an important source of food, and today it provides a fifth of the calories people consume globally, making its rate of cultivation the world's third highest, outstripped only by sugar and maize. Rice growers in some countries are disadvantaged because poor infrastructure or inadequate storage facilities mean they are unable to get their produce to markets or preserve it for long enough for it to be sold. But many governments show their awareness of the importance of rice by legislating to solve rice-production problems by, for example, building better roads in rice-growing areas. Acknowledging that rice is the staple food of more than half the world's population, the United Nations declared 2004 to be the International Year of Rice, thus affirming the importance of rice in alleviating global poverty and malnutrition. 15
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- 4 Rice continues to be a popular crop for a variety of reasons. It comes in a choice of flavours, which depend on the type of rice used or spices added to it; arborio, basmati, jasmine and coconut rice are but a few of the options. It is impossible to become bored with eating rice. It is popular because of its variety of food uses; it can be broadly divided into three main cooking types, according to whether the grain is long, medium or short. Long grains remain separate when cooked, medium grains become sticky and can be moulded into, for example, sushi, while short grains are used to make rice pudding, which is a delicious combination of rice, milk, sugar and spices such as cinnamon. Some people prefer brown rice to white because brown rice is less processed. However, although brown rice is high in fibre and nutrition, white rice is gentler on the digestive system and often has nutrients added anyway, so, whatever choice is made, rice is a healthy option in our diets. 25
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- 5 The traditional method of growing rice is to plant seedlings and then flood the fields in 5–10 centimetres of water. This method is labour-intensive but, because it reduces weeds and deters vermin, it is an inexpensive way to obtain food, particularly in parts of the world where labour costs are low. Another reason why rice is a popular crop to grow is that it can be harvested for many seasons through a process called ratooning, where, after the harvest, the roots are left in the ground to sprout again; the ratooning process can produce a crop for up to thirty years. As long as the temperature is relatively high, rice can be grown almost anywhere, even on a steep mountainside. 40
- 6 Rice straw, left behind after harvest, is used as feed for farm animals, and to make bedding, mats and roof-hatching. Hulls – the protective covering of newly-harvested rice grains – can be used as fuel, and rice bran oil, extracted from the hulls, is suitable for high-temperature cooking methods. Thus the popularity of rice is also a result of its useful by-products. Rice is also noted for its medicinal properties. In some countries, the green part of the plant is boiled to produce an eye lotion or a cure for inflammation of internal organs, and powdered rice has been known to cure some skin ailments. 45
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Passage 2

Pedro

- 1 One afternoon we found a note left in our mailbox, written in a spidery hand. ‘Pedro: all jobs done,’ it said. He was offering his services for tree-cutting, housework, gardening, painting, decorating, rewiring and car maintenance, among other things. There was a telephone number at the foot of the list of his advertised accomplishments. My husband was impressed. ‘We should call him,’ he said. He admired people who went out to find work, who showed signs of ambition. 5
- 2 Secretly I am always rather suspicious of those who claim the ability to turn their hand to everything and I voiced my reluctance to employ Pedro. My reservation was swept aside when my husband said, ‘I think I’ll ask him to cut back those overhanging cedar trees in the driveway.’ I pointed out that there was really very little that needed to be done in the garden. But my husband was determined, adding that we had two towering pine trees leaning precariously over the terrace and stealing sunlight from four of our olive trees; these pine trees needed to be cut back too. 10
- 3 And so, at my husband’s request, Pedro arrived; a gaunt man with a lined face and sunken cheeks. He was friendly and certainly eager for a few days’ employment. The deal was struck. On the appointed morning, four other men arrived, parking the oldest, most ramshackle car I had ever seen; they were armed with chainsaws and an arsenal of useless, ageing gardening tools, plus a stack of ominously heavy lunchboxes. I was thankful we hadn’t asked Pedro to do car maintenance for us. ‘Pedro always arrives last,’ they announced proudly. ‘Show us the trees, and we will get to work.’ 15 20
- 4 Having done that, I watched from the window as the men stared at the trees and then at one another with mystified expressions which turned to anger. When Pedro arrived, parking his own rusty car, the other men rushed as one, waving their tools like swords, down the drive and attacked him. I was puzzled as to what was going on but, when Pedro yelled at them, they hung their heads in shame, gathered up their assorted tools and said no more. 25
- 5 I sat at my desk, working in a world of my own. A wasp catapulted itself at the glass of the closed windows, trying to find a way out. I unlocked a window and the insect flew free. Outside, the day was hot and still. It was the silence from outside that drew my attention. I hadn’t heard the whirr of a chainsaw since the men arrived. On the pretext of going to collect the mail, I went into the garden, where I discovered the quintet at the foot of the sprawling pine trees, pushing and punching one another, fists at the ready, without so much as a single branch trimmed. ‘Is everything all right?’ I asked needlessly. They turned, waving and smiling, as though at a picnic. I was thankful they were being paid by the contract and not by the hour. Throughout the morning the men continued to fight and seemed to agree only when they stopped for lunch. 30 35
- 6 The gist of their argument, it seemed, was not how best to tackle these gigantic trees but who should be the one to shimmy up the trunks, and how they were being paid a pittance for doing such hazardous work. But finally, in the late afternoon, I heard the welcome sound of chainsaws. In the evening, Pedro banged on the door, sawdust stuck to his sweating face, to say they were quitting work for the day but would be back early in the morning. 40
- 7 Later, when my husband came home from work, we went into the coolness of the evening garden. I saw butterflies everywhere – rich golden wings tinged with yellow. It brought such pleasure. And then I noticed the damaged olive tree. One of the branches Pedro and his men had lopped had plummeted to the terrace below and torn away several boughs from one of our olive trees. I walked over to take a closer look. Ripped from the main trunk, fresh creamy-white wood exposed, the limbs were hanging in the evening light like severed silver wings. 45

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